8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
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Thus, cures of cattle and human beings, as well, bring in the fairy-lore. The good people may take anything from hens to men and women. When they mysteriously sap the strength of a man or woman, leaving him or her sick or weak and listless, he or she is little recognizable as the strong helper and friend of former years. The vitality has gone out of him or her. The country-people can believe that 'they' have spirited away the real person and left in his place "some spent old man that they had with them for a long time". The real person is 'away'. Cures, both religious and responding to the fairy-cult, must bring him back. That does not mean that they do not recognize what we might call natural sickness or disease; they do, only too well, from bitter experience. It means only that they have an explanation for it that infuses it with the associations they have about their belief.

For the belief in changelings, about which you all have heard a great deal, has its root in the fairies' 'taking'. In fact, it is sometimes said, as it was to Lady Gregory, that "all persons who die are taken, except the old people". Only for them is death the natural course of events; all others have fallen prematurely into the power of the supernatural forces.

Thus we can see that the countryman's fairy belief is not entirely a catalogue of wonders, by any means. Nearly all the disturbances of his interests and sentiments can be brought into the scope

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again, emotion is enlisted in the fashioning of social habit.

If we leave aside marriage, where folk-custom and folk-belief are no less important toward the same ends, we can devote our attention to the greatest change of all. Death brings the greatest disturbance in social habit. It shakes emotional equilibrium to its foundation. Yet society must allow for death; it must provide an orderly transition and continuance.

The devout Irishman, of course, finds his greatest consolation in his Catholic Faith. He knows the fate of his loved ones. His religion teaches him how to communicate with them, in the Communion of Saints, through prayer. Faith heals his hurt and it gives him a way of filling the void death creates.

Yet, as I have said, he has room in his heart and mind for the fairy-belief too. Social life must take account of death no less than religion. When death removes one of the human beings to whom he is related as brother, friend or fellow, it leaves behind the traces of sentiment and habit that were once bonds of relationship and association. These must be reformed, and in the reformation a new synthesis between the dead member of the group and the living be found. The countryman resembles us all in this respect; he cannot forget 'the old familiar faces'. He must have an explanation in the world-view of folklore and folk-custom for

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the effect they still exert upon him after they are gone.

So the dead join 'them'. On the border-line between the mundane world and the mysteries of Faith, they find a place in the ranks of the good people, as the misnamed fairies are often called. They are the denizens of rath and fort and hill and cave. There is nothing fundamentally incompatible between this and religious belief, however folklore may escape the control of dogma and sometimes, in its humbler vein, run counter to it. The dead do affect the living, in memory and in tradition. Death is the 'other world' to which we are all advancing. As one fellow could say in a burst of poetic imagery growing out of folk-belief: "The old people in the west room are going down with the sun".

Why not indeed, when we remember that the good people are not always by any means evil and forbidding? They exert their power for both good and evil. They bring reward as well as punishment. The countryman has friends among them as he has friends among men in this world. An Aran woman put the belief for Lady Gregory in words which transport earthly loyalties to the other world. "There's often fighting heard about the house when one is sick. That is what we call the fighting of friends, for we believe it is the friends and enemies of the sick person fighting for him."

Indeed, the same aids that make up habit and

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

796
at breakfast and lamb, if available, at supper, and the family goes out only to attend [262]
mass. Many homes are decorated then for the 12 days, with cards received and [363]
sprigs of holly placed on windowsills and fireplace mantels and crepe paper and
balloons hung from the ceiling. More visiting among relatives is done between [674]
St. Stephen's Day and Epiphany than at any other time of the year, and guests are
treated to cakes and drinks, which include liquor.

764
Whereas the folk during the Christmas season are the most optimistic and
expansive, they are the least so for the three or more days following the death of
one of their number. Work halts until after the burial of the deceased—"out of
respect for the body"—and subdued talk focuses on death and salvation and the
tribulations of life on earth. It is at this time that the masochism of the islanders is
most in evidence, and they are most prone to discuss the teachings of the church,
to reveal doubts concerning the afterworld, and to bemoan their own sinful lives.
In evaluating the career of the person who has just died, an attempt is made to [761]
explain the cause of his demise, and both natural and supernatural causes are con-
sidered. Most deaths are attributed to the natural causes of old age, illness, and
accident; but death also can come as the result of God's will and the actions of
the Devil and malignant pagan forces, such as witches of the evil eye and ghosts.
765
The immediate mourning for one who dies before the age of 40 years is deep and
prolonged, particularly if small children are left with only a single parent, and it
is believed that "the good die young." One of the most disliked traditions in Inis
Beag is that of formal mourning for a year, during which time social activities for
close relatives of the deceased are curtailed severely; they cannot attend parties,
sing, dance, or play music in their homes, and men must reduce in number their
visits to the pubs. Life is so dull as a matter of course, so the complaint is, that
placing restrictions on what few social activities are available makes it almost
unbearable.

764
When a person dies, his body is "waked" in the house until taken in pro-
cession to the church during the late afternoon of the day following death. Another
procession escorts the coffin to the cemetery early the next morning, after it has
stood the night unattended near the altar. How many folk attend the wake and [602]
compose the two processions depends on the number of the dead person's kin, his [554]
prestige status, and how well he was liked. The "laying out" of the corpse for the
wake is done by close female relatives of the deceased; they wash the body and
powder its face, put on the clothes or habit, and prepare the bed on which the
corpse will rest. A man may be attired in new white bawneens and *crios* and a
woman in her wedding dress, but it is becoming more common today for the body
to be clothed in a purchased brown habit. On the breast the hands are crossed and
rosary beads entwined in the fingers, and the corpse is covered up to the chest
with a white sheet which later is used to wrap it up in the coffin. The manufacture [322]
of the coffin usually is assigned to one of the canoe and furniture makers, who [463]
assembles it crudely with unpainted boards and delivers it the night of the wake
or the following morning.

764
The wake now is a solemn occasion in most of Ireland, and is attended for
198
the purpose of praying for the soul of the dead and sympathizing with the relatives
of the deceased. But until recently it was a gay affair, merrier than a wedding,

Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community

Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies such as nudity and physiological evacuation, are considered sexual in Inis Beag. Nudity is abhorred by the islanders, and the consequences of this attitude are numerous and significant for health and survival. Only infants have their entire bodies sponged once a week, on Saturday night; children, adolescents, and adults, on the same night, wash only their faces, necks, lower arms, hands, lower legs, and feet. Several times my wife and I created intense embarrassment by entering a room in which a man had just finished his weekly ablutions and was barefooted; once when this occurred, the man hurriedly pulled on his stockings and said with obvious relief, "Sure, it's good to get your clothes on again." Clothing always is changed in private, sometimes within the secrecy of the bedcovers, and it is usual for the islanders to sleep in their underclothes.

Despite the fact that Inis Beag men spend much of their time at sea in their canoes, as far as we could determine none of them can swim. Four rationales are given for this deficiency: the men are confident that nothing will happen to them, because they are excellent seamen and weather forecasters; a man who cannot swim will be more careful; it is best to drown immediately when a canoe capsizes far out in the ocean rather than swim futilely for minutes or even hours, thus prolonging the agony; and, finally, "When death is on a man, he can't be saved." The truth of the matter is that they have never dared to bare their bodies in order to learn the skill. Some women claim to have "bathed" at the back of the island during the heat of summer, but this means wading in small pools with skirts held knee-high, in complete privacy. Even the nudity of household pets can arouse anxiety, particularly when they are sexually aroused during time of heat. In some homes, dogs are whipped for licking their genitals and soon learn to indulge in this practice outdoors. My wife, who can perform Irish step-dances and sing many of the popular folk songs, was once requested to sing a seldom-heard American Western ballad; she chose "The Lavendar Cowboy," who "had only two hairs on his chest." The audience response was perfunctory and, needless to say, she never again was "called out" to sing that particular song.

The drowning of seamen, who might have saved themselves had they been able to swim, is not the only result of the sexual symbolism of nudity; men who were unwilling to face the nurse when ill, because it might have meant baring their bodies to her, were beyond help when finally treated. While my wife and I were on the island, a nurse was assaulted by the mother of a young man for diagnosing his illness and